

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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For Immediate Release

March 13, 2008

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
AFTER VIDEO TELECONFERENCE WITH AFGHANISTAN  
PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM LEADERS AND  
BRIGADE COMBAT COMMANDERS

Roosevelt Room

11:27 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: As you can see here on the screen in front of me, we've got assembled in Afghanistan -- thanks to Ambassador Wood -- PRTs, which is Provincial Reconstruction Teams, made up of military and civilian personnel, all aiming to help the Afghans recover from unbelievable brutality of the Taliban and have a society that's capable of meeting the needs of its people. We've also got two members of the PRT here present with us.

Our strategy in Afghanistan is, one, to provide enough security so civil society can move forward. Any counter -- effective counterinsurgency strategy will require more than just military action. It requires a military-civilian interface. And so if you look on the screen you see brave and courageous Americans in uniform and not in uniform, because they're a part of this strategy to help Afghans, one, understand the blessings of good governance -- in other words, the folks are attempting to fight corruption at the local level so that the local citizens are able to have a positive outlook about their government. We're also working to educate people, build roads, provide good health care. And our fellow citizens are there on the ground in some difficult circumstances, all aiming to help this young democracy survive and thrive. And there are difficulties, but we're also making progress.

And the best thing we got going for us, not only do we have brave and compassionate citizens willing to serve, but we've also got an ideology based upon liberty, which stands in stark contrast to the ideology of the thugs and murderers called the Taliban. And the job at hand is to help these folks recover, help the Afghans realize there's a better future for them. And it's hard work, but it's necessary work for the security of our country.

And so it's been a great pleasure for senior members of my administration to hear the stories, to hear the issues that they face. I'm enriched by the experience, and I do want to thank you very much for serving our country. And as I mentioned to you earlier, please thank your families for them standing by you during these -- during your time of service.

God bless you all, and thank you for your time.

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11:29 A.M. EDT